



# STATE OF CONNECTICUT

## DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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Office of the  
Commissioner

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### Public Hearing – February 4, 2013 Transportation Committee

### Testimony Submitted by Commissioner Jim Redeker Department of Transportation

### Proposed S.B. 226 – An Act Concerning a Study to Increase Mass Transit Usage in Fairfield County.

The Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) does not believe a broad-based study of mass transit usage in Fairfield County is warranted at this time. There have been numerous studies conducted in the last 10 years, and much of the Department's staff and fiscal resources are committed to implementing recommendations from these previous studies, for example, the newly constructed and opened Fairfield Rail Station.

ConnDOT strongly supports efforts to increase Mass Transit and Rail usage in Fairfield County. The Office of Rail monitors and oversees railroad operations and provides reports to the Commissioner on issues related to rail operations in the State, while the Office of Transit and Ridesharing monitors and oversees bus transit operations and provides reports on issues related to bus and rideshare operations in the State.

The Department also supports the expansion of rail passenger service hours and service frequency. As part of the regular administration and improvement on the Connecticut Commuter Rail System, the Department continues to review train schedules to enhance and expand passenger service on all lines. The Department currently has an Environmental Assessment underway to investigate improvements on the Danbury Branch Line and has finished a Needs and Feasibility Study for the Waterbury and New Canaan Branch Lines and is waiting for funding to move that study to the environmental document phase and project implementation phase.

At the present time, the Department is receiving and entering into service the new generation M-8 railroad cars to replace the old M-2 rail cars. There are presently programs to encourage the use of mass transit by the traveling public which is advertised statewide by CTRIDES. ConnDOT has also conducted a Statewide Bus Study that recommended improvements to bus service in Fairfield County. Additional funding would be necessary to increase bus service in Fairfield County.

The Department has recently received a grant award in the amount of \$1,120,000.00 from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) under the Value Pricing Pilot Program (VPPP) to study the use of congestion pricing strategies in the I-95 corridor from New York to New Haven. Congestion pricing offers an opportunity to manage congestion through more efficient use of existing facilities. It also is an opportunity to finance improvements to the highways and commuter rail that can provide additional congestion relief and maintain a state of good repair.

Congestion pricing or value pricing will be evaluated in conjunction with various highway operational and safety improvements, *commuter rail improvements, and bus improvements in the corridor*. The objective will be to identify a *combination* of value pricing structures and transportation improvements that will provide substantial congestion relief in the corridor. While value pricing by itself will provide some measure of congestion relief, it also provides an opportunity to finance highway and transit improvements that the state has been unable to finance through normal revenue sources. It is also expected that there will be some synergistic effects from combining pricing and operational improvements, so overall congestion relief will be greater.

The commuter rail service on the New Haven Line is an important option for nearly 80,000 (weekday) daily trips. Previous studies have also shown that ridership on the line will increase if value pricing is implemented. Therefore, rail service will play a critical role in any value pricing alternative in the I-95 corridor. As such, the study will carefully estimate changes in transit ridership, evaluate their impacts, and identify improvements needed to accommodate the ridership increases. It will also examine transit pricing options and incentives that might help optimize use of transit. The study will closely examine shifts to transit, and especially shifts to the Metro North - New Haven Line. It will also explore transit pricing, parking pricing, and other incentives that might encourage even greater shifts to other transit options.

For further information or questions, please contact Pam Sucato, Legislative Program Manager for the Department of Transportation, at (860) 594-3013.